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Source: *Revue française d'études américaines*, No. 6, MASS MEDIA ET IDÉOLOGIE AUX ÉTATS-UNIS (Octobre 78), pp. 195-210

Published by: [Editions Belin](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20872711>

Accessed: 07-12-2015 12:35 UTC

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The Media and the Dream : the Progressive Rides Again

BY

Claude-Jean BERTRAND *

Placés sous le contrôle des milieux d'affaires, les mass media ont toujours servi leur interprétation de l'idéologie américaine. Les critiques les plus virulents reconnaissent cependant que les media se sont extraordinairement améliorés depuis les années 1960. La pression des réformateurs, dans les divers secteurs de la communication de masse, a sensibilisé les media à leurs responsabilités sociales — au point que certains parlent d'une révolution. On peut dire à tout le moins que, dans leur discours et dans leur pratique, les media américains traduisent, non plus exclusivement la version « darwiniste » de l'Américanisme, mais également la version « progressiste ».

George Seldes began his career as a reporter in 1909. He later worked as a war correspondent in France (1917-1918), in Syria (1926-1927) and in Spain (1936-1937). Yet what reputation he has won by writing not *for* the press, but *against* it. In books like *Lords of the Press* (1938) or *Never Tire of Protest* (1968), and mainly in the very first of the « journalism reviews », his biweekly *In Fact* (1940-1950) ¹, he exposed the conservative bias of American newspapers and magazines, and their submissiveness to advertisers, both of which led to unscrupulous distortion of the news. For instance, he accused the *New-York Times* of publishing pro-Franco falsehoods during the whole Spanish civil war — and he accused all but a few dailies of never reporting Federal Trade Commission « fraud orders » against the patent

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REVUE FRANÇAISE D'ÉTUDES AMÉRICAINES

medecine or cosmetics industry. What impact Seldes had is difficult to ascertain, but Ralph Nader, the most renowned and the most influential single American protester in recent years, once told him :

« Two persons influenced me in my youth. When I reached the age of fourteen I began reading the books in my father's library — Lincoln Steffens' [the eminent muckraker] and yours. I was greatly stimulated by them. Then in my freshman year in high school I stumbled upon a pile of back issues of *In Fact* in a closet of the library. It was the moral equivalent of finding a lost treasure. »²

More doggedly, more passionately, more courageously than A.J. Liebling, Seldes was the scourge of the press long before media-flogging became fashionable — and the media studiously ignored him, or branded him a Communist. In his most recent book, *Even The Gods Can't Change History* (1976), Seldes recalls some major stages in his long struggle against economic royalism and fascism, native and foreign. But most of the last chapter, the 86-year old radical devotes to

« the great change in American journalism in my six decades, and especially the great change in the recent past, an almost revolutionnary change that has resulted in the nation having a fairer and more honest press than ever before. » (p. 244)

« I may be growing old, Seldes admits, but I assure you I am not growing mellow »³ : his writings leave no doubt about it. Every veteran observer will agree with him that the American news media have improved, although no legal obligations or restrictions have been forced upon them. Certainly what is most interesting about the recent history of the press in America is that it has become *better* without becoming less *free*.

Freedom and progress : the twin core of the American ideology. Now, to my mind, the problem with Americanism, or rather its mystery, is that it is one and several, like the Christian god, only more so for there is at least four of it. Not that discussing the press calls for much theologizing. Americans, whether they are media owners, workers or consumers, are pragmatic and non-intellectual. They share a simple belief in the U.S. as the land of freedom and progress where every individual can pull himself up by his own bootstraps. Energy, optimism or self-reliance; rapacity, brutality or arrogance — just about every good or bad quality the archetypal American is supposed to have, emanates from that creed. However, there are at least four interpretations of it, and they differ widely. For practical purposes, let us label them the *pietist*, the *darwinist*, the *progressive*

and the *bureaucratic*. Among foreign students of the American scene, a tendency is to reduce its ideology to one version of it, naturally the one which the Big Media have striven to inculcate, that which equates progress with material growth, and liberty with economic liberalism. For the sake of countering such crippling reductionism, a little typological oversimplification may be forgiven ⁴.

The Pietist considers that this vale of tears is for man to prepare for an after-life. God leaves every individual free to choose salvation and, after conversion, to progress towards Christian perfection by hard work and strict adherence to the old puritanical code. It is no use trying to improve society by altering its structures so long as men remain unrepentant sinners. At all events American society is the « least worst » possible. It certainly could have been better if its cities had not been taken over by so-called ethnics and minorities. Those people should be evangelized into new-born « Christians », or else reduced to a quiescent state by the police and courts. As for the outside world, better not to bother with it, except to fend off its threats.

The Darwinist believes that power in the human jungle should be held by the strongest beasts. Natural selection is the name of the game. Men must be free to go out and fight to increase their wealth, with no interference from the government. The greatest good for the greatest number will follow automatically, meaning more goods on the market for everyone to work to earn enough to buy. The same, they say, holds for the United States among nations : being the mightiest, it should rule the roost. Whoever oppose the system is anti-American, or worse, an enemy of mankind.

The Progressive disagrees with both those views. He wishes all men and women to be equally free to advance, here and now, towards whatever they call happiness. Wild competition should be replaced by voluntary cooperation, and the goal of quantitative progress by that of qualitative progress. Though his ideal is participatory democracy and he is clearly non-Marxist, the Progressive accepts government intervention if needed to ensure equal opportunity and to preserve the common weal. He argues that even now American society conciliates economic development and individual freedom better than any other major nation. It is far from perfect admittedly. There are glaring problems — which can be solved : they merely have to be known and discussed and acted upon. Thus (the Progressive reasons) some day the American Dream will be realized in the US and, hopefully, elsewhere.

For the Bureaucrat, freedom and progress are tied to security. Mass-man wants economic stability, social acceptance and material enjoyment first. Freedom means not being bothered and progress means consuming more. Religion, free enterprise, respect for the law, civil rights are fine, but only so long as they do not run counter to his personal interests. At the upper level, the Bureaucrat is an organization man who wishes to « succeed » within his social circles and according to their sets of rules. At the lower level, he is a blue or white collar worker stuck in a dead-end job who both fears to lose it and yearns to forget about it.

Politically, while the Progressive is liberal-to-radical, while the Pietist and the Darwinist are, somewhat differently, conservative-to-reactionary the Bureaucrat-consumer is variably liberal or conservative depending on the issue. Actually, few Americans take their ideology straight. Everyone develops a personal amalgam, with unavoidable contradictions therein. Whatever his ideological mix, though, an American (a) shares enough with any of his compatriots to stand nearer them than to any foreigner, (b) is generally satisfied with the reality and conditions of America as opposed to those of other nations, and (c) is generally dissatisfied about the gap between the status quo and his particular dream of America.

Now, take the following caricature of the Land of Hope and Glory. An outer circle of hell rampant with greed, poverty and violence. What Indians were not killed off have been set aside to rot. Twenty-five million Blacks starve in putrefied inner cities. Towns and suburbs crawl with 192 million semi-zombies remotely controlled by a clique of business barons who, in their rabid race for money and power, have polluted the air, land and water, and have corrupted police, justice and politics. As a dearth of energy threatens, soon the American nightmare may not even be air-conditioned. Immediately responsible for the predicament are the media, or rather their tyrannical rider, advertising. Using the press, movies, radio and television, Big Business has forced the cult of Mammon upon the descendants of the noble Puritans, pioneers and later immigrants. It has turned the New Jerusalem into a Roman circus where the slaves compete for the dollar that provides the ultimate bliss, consumption. Inevitably, the masses are ignorant, vulgar, intolerant and brutal. The few among them who perceive the horror of their lot are crushed (like the Black Panthers) or coopted (like so many of the creators of the counter-culture) or exhibited as tokens of democracy (like Ralph Nader). So the US smoothly moves nearer to Corporate Statism and/or the ter-

minal stage of social cancer. Such a vision of Darwinist America could be ignored if it issued from the propaganda machine of a rival empire, or if it was used by despondent citizens of less affluent nations to buttress their egos. But many American radicals have subscribed to this view. In the Sixties there were thousands of them on American college campuses.

The media neatly illustrate their case. Pick up a typical (i.e. small) American newspaper. Advertising fills 60 to 70 % of the printed surface. Much of the rest is local trivia and syndicated trash. Switch on the radio : it unwinds a sonorous string of Top-40, rock or country-and-western music, beaded with commercials and, here and there, a « rip 'n' read » mini-news bulletin. What does television provide ? Soap operas and game shows and situation comedies and « action » series, all designed to keep viewers quiescent, all dislocated by commercial incitements to consume. Even TV news looks as if it were a pot-pourri of the entertainment programs. Those who know more about the media know worse : the continuing multimedia concentration of ownership, the proprietors' shameful obsession with the advertising dollar, their short-sighted worship of ratings and marketing surveys, their underhanded support of all business interests, both within and outside the US.

The evidence for this, and more, can be found :

- in books by such radical press critics as James Aronson ⁵, Robert Cirino ⁶, or Herbert Schiller ⁷;
- in the « Establishment » reports of presidential and congressional commissions — and those of thoughtful experts funded by private institutions or by foundations ⁸;
- here and there in professional periodicals, like the *ASNE Bulletin* or the *Quill* ⁹, and in university publications, like the *Freedom of Information Center Reports* or the *Nieman Reports* ¹⁰;
- from cover to cover in campus-based or autonomous « journalism reviews », be they national (like the *Columbia JR*, or *MORE*) or local (like *The Pretentious Idea* in Tucson, or the *Washington JR*);
- in articles written for national magazines, for city magazines, or for 50-odd alternative weeklies (e.g. *The Village Voice* or the *Denver Straight Creek Journal*), by such professionally-oriented critics as Ben Bagdikian ¹¹, Nicholas Johnson ¹², or various Freelancers and staffers.

Further evidence abounds in the regular weeklies and dailies : in the media sections of *Time* and *Newsweek*, in *TV Guide* features, in the pieces done for the *Los Angeles Times* by media reporter David

Shaw, or the column of Charles Whipple, the *Boston Globe* ombudsman. « While press criticism may not rank with baseball as a national pastime, it is not far behind »¹³. Whatever accusation can be levelled at the structures or the contents of American media is available for all to see *in the American press*.

Ay, there's the rub, for in the sleep of Darwinism, the progressive dream has come. The media may still be bad, compared to what they should be, but they are good, compared to what they used to be. The Progressive creed, as far as the media are concerned, was well expressed by William Allen White, the famous editor of the tiny *Emporia* (Kansas) *Gazette*. « All that is necessary is for the reporter to tell the facts fairly and honestly, and the truth will take care of itself », he once told George Seldes, who comments : « Newspapers for 30 years did not report the facts fairly and honestly »¹⁴. Why they have improved is because their transgressions have been pilloried on the market-place by minority militants, student activists, feminists, consumerists, environmentalists, professors, politicians and media personnel. The mass media, of course, tried their usual tactics of ignoring or insulting their critics — still, they actually published much of the criticism. Sometimes they could not avoid echoing the attack, like Spiro Agnew's partly justified vituperations of 1969. Sometimes one medium delighted in mauling a rival. Sometimes the media had to yield to employee or customer pressure, i.e. they heard Reporter Power rumblings or saw the « credibility gap » yawning.

The great offensive against the media was launched in the late 1960s, when an ancient strain of American radicalism emerged on the campuses — but groundwork for this assault had been laid much earlier. Soon after the printed press turned into a big business, in the late nineteenth century, the Muckrakers trained their guns on it, among them Will Irwin with the celebrated 1911 investigative series on press corruption he wrote for *Collier's*. From then on, small circulation political or literary magazines published media criticism regularly¹⁵. In 1923, the year after the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) was formed, it adopted one of the most widely-known codes of ethics, the *Canons of Journalism*. They were never formally enforced (and could not be, for First Amendment reasons), but at least they proclaimed officially, if implicitly, the cardinal sins of the press. Under the New Deal, the American Newspaper Guild (1933), the union of journalists, started eroding the absolute power of newspaper autocrats, while an increasing number of press critics got a hearing¹⁶. Then, after World War II, came the Hutchins Commission whose

« general report on mass communications » provided the Progressives with a doctrinal platform by analysing the failings of the press and by advocating means of ensuring that the US could have *A Free and Responsible Press* (1947). The Cold War followed which was no season for either freedom or responsibility — though A.J. Liebling was then writing, for the « Wayward Press » department of *The New Yorker*, the 82 stinging columns which made him The American Press Critic¹⁷. All the while the revenues, leisure and education of Americans were increasing, hence their consumption of media. Hence too, apparently, their degree of dissatisfaction, judging from their reaction when the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War acted as catalysts. The stranglehold which Darwinism seemed to have on the collective consciousness was loosened : the overall confidence in business slipped from 55 % in 1965 to 18 % in 1975. Within a few years the unthinkable became commonplace. By 1978 the editor of the liberal *Saturday Review* found cause to regret that « during the past decade, the antagonism between the press and big business [had] escalated into a cold war »¹⁸.

Some events of the Sixties and Seventies, which took place either inside or outside the system, are sometimes hailed as trail-blazing achievements. In 1961, the School of journalism in a major university shed the traditional smugness of such institutions and decided that part of its duty was « to assess the performance of journalism in all its forms, to call attention to its shortcomings and strengths, and to help define — or redefine — standards of honest, responsible service »¹⁹. Taking its cue from the Harvard-based *Nieman Reports* (b.1947), the school launched the *Columbia Journalism Review*. In 1964, the *Los Angeles Free Press* inaugurated the underground press : in the next few years over 400 relatively stable publications, with an overall circulation of more than 5 million, were printing what the regular press refused to publish, or the opposite of what it did publish. In 1965, Ralph Nader published his breach-opening *Unsafe at Any Speed* : consumerism was about to « take off », including media consumerism. In 1967, the Mellett Fund (managed by The Newspaper Guild) financed an experiment in local press councils, with the cooperation of journalism professors²⁰. In 1968, reporters started the *Chicago Journalism Review*, which was to be imitated by twenty other local JRs within the next four years²¹. In 1971, with strong encouragement from the Journalism School at the University in Minneapolis, the Minnesota Press Council was established — while in New York a sassy journalism review, [MORE], was born. It was the first JR which

aimed at being a regular, profit-making, magazine. The following year, [MORE] organized the first A.J. Liebling Counter-Convention to gather rank and file journalists and let them vent their protests. 1973, of course, was the first year of the Watergate : it was also the year the National News Council became operative. In the span of a dozen years, and particularly between 1967 and 1973, academics, news-people and rebellious citizens had made it abundantly clear (a) that they thought the press was not doing its job properly, (b) that professionals wanted a « voice in the product », more « democracy in the newsroom », and (c) that the public also was entitled to have its say.

These phenomena may have been overrated. After all, most were isolated, or short-lived, or both. The underground press faded away in the early seventies. With more than 1500 U.S. towns and cities owning a daily, there were never more than a dozen local press councils active at any given time, and the regional PC in Minnesota is still the only American representative of its breed. The average life-span of local reporter-produced JRs was 18 months, and even the sturdy *Chicago JR* had to fold in 1975 : only one still comes out regularly, in St Louis. Nobody mentions « Reporter Power » anymore. Does it all boil down to a few liberals getting carried away by the radical fireworks of the late Sixties ? No more than consumerism or women's liberation does. The resentment existed before and simply came to the surface under a tremendous boost from The Movement ? Even though some experiments failed, changes and innovations have been brought in that can no longer be dismissed as exceptions or tokens. They are symptoms and, to a certain extent, agents of a quiet revolution ²².

The « social responsibility » doctrine, which in the late Forties reputedly made publishers and editors raving mad, is now accepted or is at least paid lip service. The new horror theory is Jerome Barron's. He argues that because media owners can (and do) keep ideas off the market-place, it has become largely futile to protect the freedom of the press merely from government. Citizens must be given a right of access to the media, by the courts or by law — which, in Barron's « positive » interpretation of the First Amendment, is perfectly constitutional ²³. The various types of so-called New Journalism ²⁴ are now spreading in attenuated form from books and magazines to dailies and weeklies. Not only has New journalism revived the old investigative reporting (with some help from the Watergate), it has also promoted the methods of the novelist (*à la* Tom Wolfe) and introduced those of the social scientist (*precision journalism*). More generally, it has encouraged the move towards making information

useful, comprehensible and attractive. Hard news yields a little to issues and trends, raw facts to background and analysis, bland prose to style. Now at last criticism is accepted, and self-scrutiny is widely practised, even publicly. In 1973, when Loren Ghiglione organized a critical evaluation of the New England press by 13 experts, he obtained the cooperation of 98 out of the 109 papers²⁵. In 1975, an investigative team from the Minneapolis *Star* did a series focussed on its own company²⁶. In 1977 the Washington *Post* did a 12-part critical series on « The Newspaper Business »²⁷. In 1978, NBC bought the film *Network* (a caustic satire of commercial television) for later broadcasting. In other words, the press as a whole acknowledges that it is neither impeccable, nor unimpeachable.

Some media owners have led the march of progress. In recent years, four of the top newspapers have undergone near metamorphosis, without any obvious reason except a yearning on the part of their controllers, not for the glory of God or for more money and power — but for the social prestige that rewards better public service. From the mid-Fifties, the *New York Times* started changing from the city bankers' servant into the *bête noire* of the conservatives — while the *Washington Post* went on rising from second-string local sheet to challenger for n° 1 spot in the nation. The 1971 publication of the Pentagon Papers by the one, and the 1973 Woodward-Berstein masterpiece in the other, were but the most dramatic signs of the mutation. Meanwhile the *Los Angeles Times* turned from reactionary rag to best daily west of the Alleghenies, and the *Chicago Tribune* abandoned the systematic warping of the news and the stylistic eccentricities forced upon it by its late dictator Col. Robert McCormick. Via their news services, the material of the honor-roll newspapers finds its way into hundreds of smaller, i.e. mediocre, dailies — so the improvement trickles down. On the newsmagazine front, *Time* and *US News* have been shedding their conservative bias since the death of their founders, in 1967 and 1973 — while *Newsweek* went the way of its new owner, the Washington Post Company.

Editors tend to become a little more independent of publishers, especially absentee chain owners, and they have grown much more concerned with professional standards, at least on the larger publications. Some things just cannot be done anymore. Evidence that the Hearst mentality in American journalism is moribund was seen in a late 1977-early 1978 controversy (involving the National News Council) that developed over the firing of two editors : they had resisted orders from the head of the Panax group that they print questionable

articles. The ASNE, the AP Managing Editors Association (APME) and the Radio and Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) have remarkably improved their codes of ethics — something worth more than a shoulder shrug for attitude must change before behavior does. Through conventions, seminars and periodicals, those organizations and others have been spreading the new sensitivity. Publishers and editors concurring, some metropolitan dailies have recently developed strict ethical rules²⁸, especially about free travel and gifts : they now insist on paying their own way everywhere. Quite a few racist and sexist habits have been dropped, and discrimination in hiring is not as blatant. New beats like energy or ecology have been added that tend to make business leaders uncomfortable, and business itself gets more aggressive coverage. No longer is consumerism taboo : news, investigative reports, features, regular sections blow the whistle on bad products and services. Even some radio (e.g., KCBS, San Francisco) and television (e.g., WCCO, Minneapolis) stations produce consumer-oriented *Action Line* programs. The press often seems to have taken the scolding advice of the late Journalism Reviews. The Philadelphia *Enquirer*, part of the n° 2 chain in the US (Knight-Ridder) won three awards in 1978, including a Pulitzer prize, for a series on abuse of power by the local police : that subject had been a major theme of the *Philadelphia JR*.

As for complaints by the public, a number of papers have followed the Louisville *Courier-Journal's* 1967 example and now employ ombudsmen. Some merely settle grievances. Others solicit criticism by sending « accuracy forms » to people who have been in the news, or by publishing the forms so that any reader can report the errors he has noticed. Others even initiate criticism, like ombudsman Charlie Seib who, in his *Washington Post* column, sometimes castigates his employer the *Washington Post*. A medium-sized daily like Peoria *Journal-Star* spends \$ 15,000 annually to obtain feedback via a lay representative in each of its 21 distribution zones, a press council of sorts. A small newspaper like the Charleston (W.Va) *Gazette* uses a whole set of accountability devices²⁹ : right of response, bureau of accuracy and fair play, corrections on page one, and a weekly media column by the city editor. More commonly, newspapers have enlarged their Letters-to-the-Editor departments, created Op-Ed pages that court opinions and columns divergent from their own editorial stance. In April 1978 Ralph Nader released « a 90-page manual urging citizens'groups to weigh the performance of local newspapers, offering criteria for measurement and suggested actions to be taken » : even *Editor and Publish-*

er, the trade weekly that kowtows to press proprietors, called this editorially « an all right idea »³⁰.

Perhaps more important probably than any other single factor in the evolution of the media, the journalists have developed a more active sense of their social responsibility, either from having been students in the Sixties, or from covering the new activism first-hand, or from finding a better atmosphere for their long-repressed sentiments. Official sanction for employee participation in decision-making is out of the question, but various indicators point to increasing professionalization: college degree practically required, specialization, active professional organizations, codes of ethics (Society of Professional Journalists — SDX, revised 1973), embryonic forms of peer review. « Bitching » in press bars is certainly not extinct, but reporters can now air their grievances with less fear of reprisal. They may still be salaried scribblers but, at least in the better newsrooms, they have more autonomy in the choice and treatment of subjects, especially as the younger generation reaches executive positions.

A major cause of the awakening of newspeople lies in their higher education. Four or five years on campus seems to make one less narrow-minded and tame than being trained on the job. Also greater expertise makes one less passive towards interviewees, and less dispensable in the eyes of employers. Few newspapers now hire a cub reporter who has not been to college, and whatever their complaints against journalism schools, that is where they do their major recruiting. From mere hiring-halls a few years ago, the schools have become legitimate sections of the university and thus have become more independent of the media³¹. This shows in such initiatives as promoting press councils or starting campus journalism reviews, which have multiplied since the mid-1970s. Even a small department of journalism, like that of San Francisco State University, can produce a remarkable critical quarterly like *feed/back*. More common, if less visible, is the action of professors, whose Ph. D. degrees have lessened their myopic loyalty to the industry. Courses are taught on the social responsibility of the media. Textbooks now deal with such 'delicate' subjects as news distortion or undue pressure from advertisers³². It has come to the point where « journalism schools are accused of giving degrees in press criticism »³³.

The age-old foe, government itself has played a part in the shift towards progressivism. After all, the First Amendment forbids it from *restricting*, not from *increasing* the freedom of the press. At federal level, Congress legislated on access to official information by pass-

ing the Freedom of Information Act (1966), then belatedly made it efficient (1975). At the State level, a majority of legislatures have passed Open Meetings and Open Records laws. As for access to private information, it was indirectly protected in ²⁶ states by Shield Laws making it more difficult for courts to compel journalists to reveal their sources or give up their notes. However imperfect the present statutes are, they simply did not exist before. Although the Public Broadcasting Service and National Public Radio may still sound too instructional and/or too elitist, their prime time focus on culture and public affairs is definitely progressive, as Richard Nixon recognized when he endeavoured to choke them. After establishing the principle of federal aid in 1962 with the *Educational Television Facilities Act*, then turning the principle into fact with the 1967 *Public Broadcasting Act*, Congress has finally decided to fund the stations and their network a little more generously, appropriations increasing from \$ 5 million in 1969 to 120 million ten years later. In a different field again, congressional and presidential commissions, in the Warren Report (1964), the Kerner Report (1968), the Walker Report (1969) and the Surgeon General's Report (1972), have documented the responsibilities of the media in social violence. Also the regulatory agencies are now taking their duties more seriously. Goaded by consumerists, the Federal Trade Commission enforces stricter rules on advertisers. The Federal Communications Commission has in several cases been forced by the U.S. Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court to give precedence to the public interest over the broadcasters' profits, e.g. by gradually unshackling cablevision in 1972, 1975 and 1977. The record of the judiciary is mixed, especially since the mid-1970s, but on balance, the courts have accumulated decisions that have made it easier for the press to function as a forum of ideas and a watchdog of institutions. In 1964, the Supreme Court all but abolished the threat of libel suits from public officials (*New York Times v. Sullivan*), and seven years later extended the protection to libel suits by public figures ³⁴. In the Red Lion case (1969), the Court endorsed the Fairness Doctrine formulated by the FCC two years earlier to try and ensure that controversial issues would be dealt with, and dealt with fairly, by radio and television. To end the incomplete list, let us say that the executive itself contributed, albeit negatively, through the Pentagon Papers and Watergate affairs. By vainly conspiring to gag, intimidate and manipulate the press, the Nixon Administration not only blunted such weapons as official over-classification, executive privilege or subpoenas : it also gave the media pride in their adversary stance and restored their

prestige in the eyes of the public. That, to a very large extent, they did not deserve it is irrelevant : they now feel a need to live up to their reputation.

Last of the protagonists, the public too has participated in the change. Setting aside the radicals of the Sixties, more lay people now realize how important the media are and how commercialized. Citizens realize they are the ones to whom the press should be accountable. Consumers realize they can exert more influence than by merely refusing to read, listen or watch — although the decrease in newspaper buying (4 % between 1973 and 1976) and in TV viewing (3.1 to 6.4 % in 1977) is doing wonders to enlighten media owners. Also the success of such diverse, but original, TV shows as *60 Minutes*, with its news magazine format, the controversial sitcom *All In the Family* or the docu-drama *Holocaust* (1978), teaches profit-oriented routineers lessons in public taste. But citizens' action goes further. Through such bodies as the United Church of Christ, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting (NCCB) or even the national federation of PTAs — they lobby legislators or sue in court or threaten advertisers with boycotts, and thus force the media to lend them an ear. Even the very conservative American Medical Association funded Nicholas Johnson's NCCB for a study of violence in network programs in 1976-1977 — which triggered the withdrawal of nine out of the top twelve advertisers from the most violent shows after their names were published ³⁵.

Although it is not officially recognized by the industry and the profession, nor widely known to the public — one newcomer on the media scene stands as a unifying symbol of the whole polymorphous progressive trend. The National News Council (NNC) was set up by a foundation with the collaboration of some media owners, workers and consumers. It owes nothing to trade organizations like the American Newspaper Publishers Association, the National Association of Broadcasters or The Newspaper Guild. Within the (admittedly narrow) limits of what a press council can do ³⁶, the NNC has earned respect and esteem. Thus it embodies the lately radical idea that non-media-owners, be they professionals or citizens-consumers, have a say in the media process; that the quality of media service, hence the freedom of the press from government control, depend ultimately on professionals and citizens having *more and more* say. Which does not mean the system has been transmogrified, or will be in the near future. It does mean, however, that a better ideological balance is developing in the media world.

The mid-1970s revival of old-time religion has certainly made for increased anti-sex pressure on media executives but, generally speaking, the Pietist approach is limited to denominational periodicals and evangelical radio stations, to late evening and Sunday morning TV shows. The Bureaucrat does make his influence felt through sales, ratings, polls and surveys. The pandering to his tastes shows in the intellectual mediocrity and parochialism of small town and suburban newspapers; in the proliferation of self-help and gossip columns, and of « life-style » features and special sections in the metropolitan dailies (which try to increase circulation through soft news); in the success of *People* magazine, and of the pornographic media — just as it shows in the « happy talk » local news format and the persistent popularity of escapist fare on television. The struggle for ideological domination of the media, however, is between the Darwinist and the Progressive. Insofar as their interpretations of Americanism overlap, theirs is no fight to the death, but a perpetual process of give and take. In the 1950s and early 1960s, it looked as if the Darwinist took all and gave nothing. Progressivism seemed crushed under the weight of money and the fear of communism. Today the Darwinist takes much and gives a little. What has happened in the meantime is that the Progressive has gotten back into the saddle and rides again — on the new frontier, on the ever-moving line between American reality and the American Dream.

NOTES

1. Directly or indirectly, the printed newsletter, dealt with the press exclusively. Thanks to the support of CIO labor unions, it reached a top circulation of 176 000 (as opposed to 35 000 for the *Columbia Journalism Review* today). Its death was mainly due to McCarthyite harassment.
2. *Even the Gods Can't Change History* (Secaucus (NJ) : Lyle Stuart, 1976), p. 238.
3. In a letter dated April 30, 1977.
4. A slightly expanded version of the typology will be found in Chapter IV of *Civilisation américaine* by C.-J. Bertrand, J. Heffer & A. Kaspi (Paris : PUF, 1978).
5. *The Press and the Cold War* (Indianapolis : Bobbs-Merrill, 1970); *Packaging the News* (New York : International Publishers, 1971); *Deadline For the Media* (Indianapolis : Bobbs-Merrill, 1972).
6. *Don't Blame the People* (1971), New York : Vintage, 1972; *Power To Persuade* (New York : Bantam, 1974).
7. *The Mind Managers* (Boston : Beacon, 1973); *Mass Communications and American Empire* (1969), Boston : Beacon, 1974; *Communication and Cultural Domination* (New York : M.E. Sharpe, 1976).
8. e.g. Ben Bagdikian, *The Information Machines* (Rand Corporation, 1971), or « A Free and Responsive Press » (1972) by the Twentieth Century Fund task force which recommended the formation of the National News Council.
9. The first published by the American Society of Newspaper Editors; the second by the Society of Professional Journalists-Sigma Delta Chi.
10. The first is attached to the University of Missouri, the second to Harvard University.
11. A collection of them, for 1962-1971, is to be found under the title *The Effete Conspiracy and Other Crimes By the Press* (New York : Harper & Row, 1972).
12. For a collection of them, see *How To Talk Back To Your Television Set* (Boston : Little Brown, 1970).
13. D.M. Rubin in « Liebling and Friends : Trends in American Press Criticism, 1859-1963 », a paper read at the AEJ convention in Ottawa, August 16-19, 1975.
14. In a letter dated June 6, 1977.
15. *The Nation*, for instance, published 95 pieces between 1900 and 1939, and *The New Republic* 53. See L.W. Hausman, « Criticism of the Press in U.S. Periodicals, 1900-1939 », *Journalism Monograph* n° 4, August 1967.
16. e.g. F. Lundberg, *Imperial Hearst* (1936); L.C. Rosten, *The Washington Correspondents* (1937); H. Ickes, *America's House of Lords* (1939); S. Bent, *Newspaper Crusaders* (1939); M.L. Ernst, *The First Freedom* (1946). Also many articles by such as Oswald G. Villard or Heywood Broun.
17. See the collections entitled *The Wayward Pressman* (1948), *Mink and Red Herring* (1949), *The Press* (1961).
18. Carl Tucker in *Saturday Review*, May 13, 1978, page 56. See also « Memo to the Press : They Hate You Out There » by Louis Banks, in *The Atlantic* April 1978, pp. 35-42.

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19. *Columbia JR*, pilot issue, Autumn 1961.
20. See C.-J. Bertrand, « Les Conseils de presse locaux aux Etats-Unis », in *Presse-Actualité*, Mai 1977.
21. See C.-J. Bertrand, « Les Journalism Reviews, un phénomène américain », in *Presse-Actualité*, Novembre 1975, and « Journalism Reviews, a Look Back and Forth » in *Freedom of Information Center series* (University of Missouri), Forthcoming.
22. See Lee Brown, *The Reluctant Reformation : On Criticizing the Press in America* (New York : McKay, 1974).
23. See « Access to the Press — A New First Amendment Right ? » in *Harvard Law Review*, May 1967, and *Freedom of the Press For Whom ? The Right of Access to Mass Media* (Bloomington : Indiana UP, 1973). In *Tornillo v. Miami Herald Co* (418 US 241 (1974)), the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously rejected the theory.
24. See E.E. Dennis & W.L. Rivers, *Other Voices : The New Journalism in America* (San Francisco : Canfield Press, 1974), and C.-J. Bertrand, « Le Néojournalisme américain », in *Presse-Actualité*, Janvier 1977.
25. See Loren Ghiglione ed., *Evaluating the Press : The New England Newspaper Survey* (Southbridge (MS), 1973).
26. *Minneapolis Star*, August 25 through September 6, 1975.
27. *Washington Post*, July 24 through August 4, 1977.
28. For the interesting program of the Marshall Field Newspapers in Chicago, see *The Quill*, November 1974, page 10.
29. For a survey of such devices, see « A Survey of U.S. Daily Newspaper Accountability Systems » by Keith P. Sanders, in *ANPA News Research Bulletin*, July 1975, pp. 148-168.
30. *Editor & Publisher*, April 29, 1978, page 6.
31. See C.-J. Bertrand, « Les Ecoles de journalisme aux Etats-Unis », in *Presse-Actualité*, Avril 1977.
32. e.g. W.K. Agee, P.H. Ault & E. Emery, *Introduction to Mass Communications* (New York : Harper & Row, 5th ed., 1976) : Part III — or P.M. Sandman, D.M. Rubin & D.B. Sachsman, *Media : An Introductory Analysis of American Mass Communications* (Englewood Cliffs (NJ) : Prentice-Hall, 1972) : Part Two.
33. M.L. Stein, at the ASNE Convention in Honolulu, May 3, 1977.
34. Although there has been some pulling back from this liberal standard, it is still largely in force.
35. See « The Fight Over Television Violence Ratings », by P.M. Sandman in *MORE*, April 1978, pp. 35-40.
36. See C.-J. Bertrand, « Press Councils : An Evaluation », *Gazette*, Winter 1977, pp. 217-229, and « Press Councils : Unravelling a Defitional Dilemma », *Journalism Quarterly*, Summer 1978.